

WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU
Romans 3:21-31 Part 7
Rick Edwards

Donald Barnhouse once called this passage "the most important paragraph in the Bible."

I. IMPORTANT WORDS THAT DESCRIBE OUR SALVATION - Romans 3:24

Justification Redemption Atonement

II. A DETAILED EXPLANATION OF OUR SALVATION - Romans 3:21-26

Nine wonderful facts about Salvation:

1. Designed by God.

"... a righteousness from God..." (vs. 21a)

2. Unearned

"... apart from the Law ..." (vs. 21b)

3. Unhidden. Its not a secret

"... has been made known... the Law and the Prophets testify" (vs. 21c)

4. It is through faith in Jesus Christ _

"... through faith in Jesus Christ ..." (vs. 22)

5. Available to everybody who believes.

"... to all who believe ..." (vs. 22b)

6. Salvation is necessary

"... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (vs. 23)

7. Undeserved

"... and are justified freely by His grace..." (vs. 24)

We are justified three ways:

- By grace. V 24
- By His blood. V. 25
- By faith V 28

Justification is more than just forgiveness. It means that there is absolutely, no longer, any case at all against you. It's wiped out. You are in a perfect standing with God. All the charges are dropped.

8. Comes through Jesus

"God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement..." (vs. 25)

- **What is redemption? It means to release by paying a ransom**

9. Is expensive

"God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement....through faith in His blood." 3 V 25

- **Atonement** means to satisfy a debt. Jesus took our place on the cross. He took our sins and transferred His righteousness to us. His life paid our sin debt.

III. WHY DID GOD CREATE HIS PLAN OF SALVATION?

Romans 3:25b-26

- To take care of the past "beforehand"
- To take care of the present & future "at the present time"

Fact: The Cross covers past, present and future sins!

Jesus died for sins you commit- yesterday, today, and tomorrow!

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

Romans 3:27-31

- **There is no reason for pride V 27-28**
- **There is no reason for prejudice V 29-30**
- **There is no reason for presumption V 31**

WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU

Rick Edwards

If I were to ask you to define the Gospel do you think you could do it? That's what we're going to look at: What is the Gospel? We have a description of the gospel in a capsule paragraph. Paul clarifies it; he spells it out in technical terms.

We're going to look at the basics of Christianity, the foundations of our beliefs. It sounds technical but it's extremely important. If you don't get what we're talking about tonight you don't understand what salvation is all about. It's that simple. The few verses we're going to look at, in capsule form, is the whole message of Christ.

Donald Grey Barnhouse said this is the most important paragraph of the Bible. Martin Luther said it's the chief point of the whole Bible.

Next week as we get into chapter 4 we're going to look at an illustration. But tonight is an explanation of what God has done for us.

v. 21 *"But now a righteousness from God apart from the Law has been made known to which the Law and the prophets testify."* Anytime you see the word "but" you ought to stop and say, "What is it there for?" (Like the word "therefore" -- ask "What is it there for?") Anytime you see the word "but" it means "I'm going to give you a new thought."

Paul has been talking for three chapters, building a case logically step by step.

We now come to a second major section of Romans.

- **The first section is the section on sin.**

He points out everybody is guilty, no man is innocent, all have sinned so we all need to be saved. He's been building this case.

Now in 3:21 he says, *"but now"*. Thank God for those two words. This is a major turning point in the book of Romans.

- **Now he's going to talk about the second section of Romans -- Salvation, How do I get right with God?**

In the past he's been building the case and it's been getting darker and darker. *"But now"* the light shines through.

In this section he gives us some great gospel words. "Just as a great door swings on small hinges so important theological statements of the Bible often depend upon the smallest words such as prepositions and articles.

Most of the great doctrines of the Word of God revolve around a single word such as grace, atonement or faith. In order to understand the deeper meaning of scripture you must study the specific words that were used.

Correct interpretation of Biblical truth depends on correct understanding of the words used to convey these truths.

David declared *"The words of the Lord are flawless like silver refined in the furnace of fire, purified seven times."* Proverb writer stated similarly, *"Every word of God is flawless."*

Words are important and there are three words in this section tonight you cannot miss. They describe the three miracles that God does for you when you're saved. They are the words all in v. 24:

- 1. Justification (and also in 26, 28, and 30) It's a courtroom term.**
- 2. Redemption. This is a slavery term used in the slave market.**
- 3. Atonement.**

These three key words all describe what God has done for us that we cannot do for ourselves.

v. 21-26. Paul gives us a detailed explanation.

1. "A righteousness from God." V 21a

The first thing we can say about salvation is that it was designed by God. Salvation was designed by God. Man didn't think it up. He didn't take the initiative. it wasn't his ingenuity. God thought up the whole plan of salvation we're going to look at.

2. Salvation is unearned. V 21b "A righteousness apart from the law".

Up in v. 20 it says no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the Law. You don't get to heaven by works, by trying to earn it, by keeping the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. You are not saved by earning it, by working for it. It's apart from the Law. In the Old Testament there are three kinds of law: moral law, civil law, ceremonial law. These three kinds of laws are talked about in the first five books of the Bible. Paul says none of these are going to get you to heaven. It is apart from the law. God has always saved people the same way. Look at Hebrews 11. Our natural tendency is to try to do things to get to heaven but it is apart from the law.

3. Salvation is unhidden V 21c "It is righteousness apart from the law that has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify." Salvation is unhidden.

It's not a secret. It's not something Paul thought up. It's not a new message. It has been around for a long time. this was not an innovation of Paul. People had been saved all throughout history. It's been made known and the law and the prophets testify. He's talking about the Old Testament.

1 Peter 1:10-11 Peter backs up what Paul says. This message about you don't earn your way to heaven had been taught throughout the Old Testament. *"Concerning this salvation of the prophets who spoke of the grace (circle this. The Old testament talks about grace. The Bible says, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.") that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and the circumstances in which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the suffering of Christ and the glories that would follow."*

He's saying the whole Bible teaches the same thing. You're saved by grace through faith. It's not something new that just happens in the New Testament. When you look at the sacrificial system it teaches that somebody was going to die for somebody else.

4. It is through faith. Faith in Jesus Christ. V 22 When you look at this passage and look at how many times the word "faith" is used, you realize that the whole Christian life can be summed up in the word "faith". All of the other religions of the world have the idea *do* and the Christian life says *believe, accept, have faith*.

Sometimes I talk to Christians who, when they're asked if they're Christians say, "I'm trying." It's like being pregnant: You either you are or you aren't! It's not a matter of trying to be a Christian; it's a matter of trusting. It's by faith.

There are two mistakes people make when it comes to faith in Christ.

1. They say "I don't have enough faith." It doesn't matter how much or how little you've got. It's not the amount. It's the object that you put it in. The Bible says if you have faith of a mustard seed you can move a mountain. It's not the size of your faith, it's the size of your God. You don't have to have a lot of faith. Everybody has faith. You have faith when you set down in a chair that it will hold you up. You have faith when you get on the freeway in the morning. You have faith when you eat your cream of wheat that your wife didn't poison it! Everybody has faith, it's just what do you put it in?

2. The second mistake is putting faith in faith. They think their faith in their faith is going to get them to heaven. No, it's faith in a person. Your faith is only as good as the object you put it in.

Faith doesn't save you; Christ does. By the way, it's not faith in God. Even the devil believes and trembles and you're not going to find the devil in heaven. A lot of people are going to miss heaven by 18 inches -- they have a head knowledge but not a heart knowledge. Faith in Greek means to trust in, cling to, rely on, adhere to. For instance, I believe in Hitler, but I'm not a Nazi. But I believe in Jesus and I'm a Christian. Commitment is the difference. It's faith in a person.

5. The salvation is available to everybody who believes.

The salvation is available to everybody who believes. That's the one condition. It has a universal appeal: salvation is available to everybody, everybody needs it, everybody can have it. You just believe. It's not believe and work real hard. Example: Let's say you're going to take an elevator up to the twentieth floor of the building. You get on the elevator, go up three floors and then get off. Then you climb the stairs for three floors. Then you get back on the elevator and go up another three. Then you get off and climb the stairs ... Would that be silly? Sure. A lot of people try to get saved that way. Trust in Christ and then work real hard, trust for awhile, then work ... No! Once you get on the elevator you stay on and trust it to get you all the way to the top. That's the way it is being a Christian. When I became a Christian I laid my life in God's hands, "God, I don't understand it all but I'm laying my faith and trust in You." Salvation is available to all who believe. Believe means to put your confidence in.

6. Salvation is necessary V 23

v. 23 *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* Salvation is necessary. It's necessary because we've all fallen short. The two verbs in this verse are in two different tenses. In the Greek language there are nine different tenses. It is the most technical and precise language ever known to man. That's why God chose it for the Bible. We have past, present and future. They have nine different tenses to be very technical in the exact meaning.

The two different tenses in the verbs, the first one says, *"All have sinned"*. That is in what's called the aorist tense. It simply means past, done for, once for all situation. *"All have sinned."* That's an established fact. But then it says, *"and fall short"*. This is in the present tense which means continual, ongoing, continually falling short. It's a continuous action and it doesn't quit!

Both of these words, in the Greek, are used for athletics. The word used in *"all have sinned"* is an archery term. When you shot an arrow and missed the bulls eye and your arrow fell short, you'd say "It sinned!" The arrow fell short, it missed the mark. That's what the verse is saying, "All have missed the mark of God's standard."

Then the word that says, *"all have fallen short"* is an athletic term that literally means to fall behind in a race. The Bible says all of us have done that.

Have you ever heard anybody say, "I'm better than so and so" -- they think God is going to grade on the curve.

That's what God says, we all fall short. To be good enough to get to God you'd have to be perfect. And nobody's perfect. All fall short. Sure, some make it further than others. There is no doubt there are people in this world that are better than I am morally. But thank God I'm not trying to get there on my own effort. Because all fall short. I don't live up to my own standard much less God's. I disappoint myself, much less disappointing God. The Bible says, all have sinned. Our salvation is necessary.

What is *"the glory of God"*? Different scholars have different opinions on this. **I agree with those who say that the glory of God is referring to the way God made man intentionally to be.** He's talking about God's ideal. When God made man in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve brought glory to God because they were perfect, they had a perfect relationship. But they blew it! They sinned and fell short and the glory was lost.

***"all fall short of God's glory"* means we all fall short of God's ideal.** We all fall short of the potential that God has put into each of our lives. **We sin and we loose that potential.**

7. It's undeserved. V 24 Now we're getting down to the meat of the passage. v. 24 is one of the most significant verses in the entire Bible. *"... and are justified freely by His grace..."* Our salvation is undeserved. We get it freely by God's grace. The word "freely" literally means without a cause. This word freely is only used one other time in the New Testament. John 15:25 Jesus is speaking about how the world did not come to Christ but they hated Christ and He was being rejected. The disciples were bothered by this and Jesus said if the world hates Him it will hate His disciples. *"But this is to fulfill what is written in their law, they hated me without reason."* Other translations: *"without a cause."* That is the same word that is used in Romans that means "freely."

What does it mean when God justifies us freely? It means "without a cause". You didn't do anything to earn it. It was unmerited, undeserved.

We see this over in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 7:6. Why did God choose the Jews? Of all the nations He could have chosen why did He choose the Jews? This verse says God chose them because! That's the reason! "You are a holy people to the Lord your God. The Lord God has chosen you out of all of the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people, His treasured possession."

Do you get a reason for it in there? No! He choose. Because! v. 7 *"The Lord did not set His affection on you and choose you because you are more numerous than other people..."* The Israelites are a small nation. "... *But it was because the Lord loved you.*" Why? Just because! Why did He love them? Did they deserve that He love them? It was without a cause.

That's what Paul is saying here about our own salvation. Romans 3. There is no intrinsic reason that we deserve to be saved. We'll see this illustrated when we get to chapter 4.

Justified is a key word in the Bible. In just three chapters we've seen this word three times as a verb and four times as a noun. It's one of the key words in Paul's letters to the Romans. Justified, justify, justification. **It's a legal term -- a term used in a courtroom. It literally means "to declare not guilty."**

It means to be acquitted. To make right. It is the legal act of God declaring guilty people guiltless. It changes our standing before God. We need to be justified because we all have fallen short. We are justified three ways:

1. By grace. v. 24. The word grace is the same word from which we get our word charity. Charity comes from the word grace -- charis -- charismatic. They emphasize grace. A charismatic person a lot of times means they are real flashy or flamboyant, an attractive personality. Literally in Greek it means they are gracious. Full of grace. Paul uses this word over a hundred times in his letters. He says we are justified by grace. It is a free gift. We do not deserve to be declared "not guilty" but God does it just as a free gift.

2. By His blood. v. 25. *"God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood."* Hebrews 9:22 says *"Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."*

The source of our justification is grace, the ground of our justification is blood. The condition is in v. 28.

3. "By faith *For we maintain that a man is justified by faith."* V 28

We're justified three ways: by grace, by blood, and by faith.

Justification is more than just forgiveness. It means that there is absolutely, no longer, any case at all against you. It's wiped out. You are in a perfect standing with God. All the charges are dropped. It's not like you're just forgiven. The charges are dropped! There's not even a case against you. It is forgiveness plus righteousness.

The word says "We are justified by His grace." The word justified is in the passive tense which means it's something that's done to us. Justification is something that God does to us. He declares us innocent, not guilty. We don't earn it, we don't work for it. It's just something that God does to us.

Imagine yourself standing before a judge and you know 100% that you're guilty and you're waiting for the verdict. Your knees are trembling. The judge looks at you and says, "You are acquitted." That's justification! God declares you Not Guilty for all of the sins you have committed.

How do you get in on that? Part of it's by faith.

8. Salvation comes through Jesus". V 25.. *through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus".* The eighth thing we can say about our salvation is that it comes through a person. Jesus. It doesn't come through a religion or through baptism or ritual. It doesn't come through principles, a bunch of do's and don'ts. It comes through a person. Jesus Christ.

There's a second key word here. Redemption. Salvation is made possible because of the redemption. There is more theology packed in these verses than any other place in the Bible. More truth in these verses than some entire books. Paul gives an overview and then goes on to expand it in the next couple of chapters.

What is redemption? It means to release by paying a ransom. It was used two different ways in Paul's day in the Roman Empire.

- **It was used to refer to slaves.**

Every day you could go downtown Rome to the open market and there was a slave market. You could go and buy slaves. There were over a half million slaves in Rome when Paul wrote this letter. Over half the population in Rome were slaves.

They had no rights at all. **When you would go to a slave market and buy a slave you would pay a redemption, a price to release that slave. You could either take them home with you or you could set them free.** That's the term Paul is using here. Paul later on talks about how we are in a sense spiritual slaves. **We are slaves to our habits that we can't break, to our passions, to our own desires, to sin. Jesus Christ came and paid the ransom.**

An example of this. I Cor. 6:19-20 *"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body."*

What price? When Jesus Christ gave His life for us, He bought our freedom. He paid the price, the ransom, the redemption.

. You or somebody pays a price. In this case God paid a price for us to set us free from sin.

It was used to refer to slaves.

- **It was also used in another sense that all of us can relate to: taking of hostages, kidnapping.**

When some plane gets hijacked in the Middle East and they land somewhere and say, "You can have these people back if you will set a certain number of people free in exchange." That is a transaction of redemption. Somebody paying for somebody else's freedom.

In a sense we're hostages. 2 Tim. 2:26. In v. 23 and following he's talking about the duties of pastors and saying to Timothy who was a pastor, an elder. The words are interchangeable. bishop, pastor, elder in scripture are interchangeable. **'Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid argument because you know they produce quarrels. The Lord's servant must not quarrel. Instead he must be kind to everybody. He must be able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him, he must gently instruct and hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil who has taken them captive to do his will.'** Paul says we're held hostage by the devil against our will. **And God sets us free. He redeems us. The price, Titus 2:14, "When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He paid the ransom."**

9. It is expensive. It is free but it is not free.V 25

It is a gift but somebody had to pay for the gift. The gift was Jesus Christ giving His own life. Romans 3:25. *"God*

presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement..." Circle that word. *"...through faith in His blood."* This is a key word. There is so much in this word that next week we're going to spend the entire session on this one verse. It's one of the most important concepts you need to understand. **It is a word that is used only twice in the New Testament.** Here and one other place in Hebrews. But it's used all through the Old Testament. In Hebrew it's the word Kippur. Yom Kippur -- the Day of Atonement.

Some translations use the word "propitiation". NIV uses "the sacrifice of atonement". A very limited definition is "satisfied". Ezekiel 18:4 *"The soul that sins, it shall die."* Romans says, *"the wages of sin is death."*

When you break man's laws you pay man's penalty. When you break God's laws you pay God's penalty. God's penalty is death.

- The question is how can a God who is righteous and totally just forgive us and yet judge the sin at the same time?
- How does He get away with that?

That's the most important question you'll ever ask.

- How can a God who is totally pure and cannot stand any sin at all forgive us and yet deal with the sin at the same time?

The answer to that is this one word **atonement** This one word explains why Jesus Christ had to come and die on the cross.

The point is this, God, when He forgives, can't just say, "Forget it! It's no big deal!" God is totally just. So He has to have a reason to forgive us. There has to be a basis for it. God has a basis for it in the fact that Jesus Christ died for us. All of this is seen in the Old Testament.

Leviticus 16 explains the Day of Atonement. It was a Jewish Holy day that was a symbol of what was to happen thousands of years later when Jesus Christ came to earth to die for an atonement. In Leviticus 16 we have the story that one day a year they were to go out and get two goats.

- **The high priest was to take these two goats as a symbol. One of the goats he was to sacrifice as an offering, representing someone giving their life for the sins of the whole nation.**
- The other goat the priest would place his hands on him and pronounce all of the sins of the entire nation of Israel for the previous year and symbolically put them on that goat and then they would take that goat out to the wilderness and let him go to represent that all of the sins were being forgotten and going out into the wilderness.

That goat was called the scape goat. The scape goat was the goat that symbolically took all of the sins onto himself and then was thrust out into the wilderness and that was to be a symbolic thing that God was forgiving it all and putting it all on one person. That doesn't mean a whole lot until you look at John 1.

John 1:29 This is what John the Baptist said the very first time he saw Jesus Christ. He saw Him walking at him from a far enough distance and turns around and says to the entire crowd listening to him, *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.'"*

Who is the scapegoat? Jesus is our scapegoat. All of those sacrifices in the Old Testament was simply to represent somebody who was coming eventually the Messiah, to take the blame of the entire world on His shoulders.

2 Cor. 5:21. This is what atonement is all about. *"God made Him who had no sin [That's Jesus. Jesus had no sin. He was perfect.] to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."* God took all of the sin of the world and put it on Jesus Christ. Why? Because He loved us.

Romans 5:8 *"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this while we were still sinners Christ died for us."* That is what atonement is all about.

Romans 3. Why did God create the plan of salvation? Why did God send Jesus Christ to do that? He did it for two reasons:

1. v. 25b. *"He did this to demonstrate His justice because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand [circle this] unpunished."*

2. v. 26 *"He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time [circle this] so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Christ."*

God did it for two reasons: a reason in the past and a reason in the future.

Beforehand. *"In His patience He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished."* Did God let people get away with sin in the Old Testament? Was God a softie in the Old Testament and all of a sudden got severe in the New Testament? He said God was patient with people in their sins in the Old Testament but He's not anymore. He's talking about those who lived before Christ. He's referring to all of the sins committed B.C. -- Before Christ.

He's saying God passed over those sins because God looked ahead and knew what Jesus Christ would do. He said, "I know what's happening now but I know who's going to pay for it. There is someone who is going to pay for them.

There is a coming Messiah." He was patient when people sinned in the Old Testament because He knew Jesus would die. All of the Old Testament animal sacrifices never saved anybody.

They were just the symbol of what was really going to happen years later. When Jesus died he reached all the way back to Adam and paid for every sin that had ever been done wrong since the beginning of the world. That took care of the past but that doesn't help us.

The next verse helps us. All of us were born A.D. He said God did this to show His justice regarding those born after Christ -- *"at the present time"*. ***"So as to be just as the one who justifies"*** -- **Jesus was God's representative and Jesus was man's representative. He played both sides.**

God is just in forgiving us. He has a reason to forgive us because of what Jesus Christ did.

The Application: The cross covers the past, the present, and the future. When Jesus Christ died on the cross He's already died for sins you're going to commit tomorrow. He not only died for the ones you committed yesterday, and the ones you committed today but when Jesus died on the cross He died for everything I'm going to do for the rest of my life. He died for the sins my kids are going to commit and their kids. See why I said this is the heaviest section in the entire Bible? It paid past, present, and future.

The consequences of salvation. Paul concludes. He says in light of all these heavy truths there are three consequences of salvation:

1) There is no reason for pride.

God's going to do this for you, not because you deserve it. It's a free gift. It's not because you want it -- it's simply a free gift! You can't brag about it. You can't brag about how you worked your way to heaven. If people could work their way to heaven, can you imagine what heaven would be like? Everybody would have their little reason for making it to heaven. Everybody would be bragging about how they got there. Ezekiel 28:17 says it was pride that kicked Satan out of heaven.

Suppose you go surfing. You get out in the heavy waves and you loose your board and you're drowning. The lifeguard comes out and saves you and brings you back in. Would you brag about how much you had trusted that life guard? Of course not! You didn't have any choice. You had to trust him.

So you can't brag about your salvation because you don't have any other alternative! You just have to trust!

2) There is no reason for prejudice. v. 27 "There's no boasting. It's excluded. On what principle? Observing the law? No? But that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." v. 29 "Is God the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles too? Yes, of the Gentiles too. Since there is only one God who would justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through the same faith."

God loves us all. Both the Jews and the Gentiles. We're all saved the same way, by faith. There is no nation, no race, no denomination that's going to get you into heaven. None will get you into heaven. And you shouldn't look down or envy anybody else. When someone has the attitude, "We've got it and you don't!" -- they don't! Because God says there is no prejudice.

3) There is no presumption. "Do we then nullify the law by this faith? Not at all. Rather we uphold it." There were some people saying, "If I'm saved by grace, who cares what I do! I'll live it up! If the law isn't going to get me to heaven, I'll just not live with it. Forget the Ten Commandments."

Paul says, the law is still valid. Valid for two reasons:

- It reveals your consciousness of sin -- when there is a standard you know when you've fallen short (v. 20); 2)
- Galatians 3:23-24 the other purpose of the law is to point us toward Christ.